## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.      A method for identifying characteristics of image media loaded into an image-forming device, comprising:

providing image media, said image media being contained within a package, said package having a bar code on a surface of said package containing information about said image media;

sensing information encoded in said bar code with a bar code reader located external to a housing of the image-forming device;

modifying settings for said image-forming device based on said bar code information; and

assigning said image-forming device settings to an image media tray in said image-forming device.

2.      The method of claim 1, wherein sensing information encoded in said bar code comprises passing said bar code across a face of a bar code reader.

3.      The method of claim 1, wherein sensing information encoded in said bar code comprises passing said bar code across a face of a bar code reader located on an exterior surface of said image-forming device housing.

4.      The method of claim 1, wherein sensing information encoded in said bar code comprises passing said bar code across a face of a bar code reader that is located peripheral to and in communication with said image-forming device.

5.      The method of claim 1, wherein sensing information encoded in said bar code comprises sensing image media characteristics and attributes describing type of image media contained in said package.

6.      The method of claim 1, wherein assigning said image-forming device settings to an image media tray comprises assigning image-forming device settings regarding media material, size, shape, material composition, color, weight, texture, roughness, resistivity, thickness, stiffness, grain direction, chemical composition, or acidity of said image media.

7.      The method of claim 1, wherein modifying settings for said image-forming device comprises reading said bar code information with an image-forming device controller and updating the image-forming device settings upon activation or resetting of the image-forming device.

8.      The method of claim 1, wherein modifying settings for said image-forming device comprises reading said bar code information with an image-forming device controller and updating the image-forming device settings when said media tray is opened or changed.

9.      The method of claim 1, wherein providing said image media comprises providing printer paper, photocopy paper, or transparencies.

10.      The method of claim 1, wherein said image-transfer device comprises a printer, a photocopy machine, a facsimile machine, or a scanner.

11.      The method of claim 1, further comprising prompting a user to pass said bar code over said bar code reader when said image-forming device senses an open tray.

12.      The method of claim 1, further comprising accessing information regarding various image media from other databases, networks, or computers.

13.      An image-forming device including a housing and at least one media tray for receiving image media, comprising:

a bar code reader for sensing information encoded in a bar code located on an outer surface of an image media package, said bar code reader located external to the image-forming device housing;

memory operably coupled to said bar code reader for receiving and storing said bar code information;

an image-forming device controller operably coupled to said bar code reader and said memory for retrieving said bar code information from said memory, for modifying image-forming device settings, and for assigning said image-forming device settings to a selected media tray.

14.     The device of claim 13, wherein said image-forming device comprises a printer, a photocopy machine, a facsimile machine, or a scanner.

15.     The device of claim 13, wherein said memory comprises random access memory (RAM), non-volatile RAM (NVRAM), or read only memory (ROM).

16.     The device of claim 13, wherein said bar code reader is located on an exterior surface of a housing of the image-forming device.

17.     The device of claim 13, wherein said bar code reader is located peripheral to and is in communication with said image-forming device.

18.     The device of claim 13, wherein said image-forming device settings comprise information regarding media material, size, shape, material composition, color, weight, texture, roughness, resistivity, thickness, stiffness, grain direction, chemical composition, or acidity of said image media.

19.     A printer device including a housing and at least one media tray for receiving image media, comprising:

a bar code reader for sensing information encoded in a bar code located on an outer surface of a printer paper package, said bar code reader located external to the image-forming device housing;

memory coupled to said bar code reader for receiving and storing said bar code information;

a printer device controller coupled to said bar code reader and said memory for retrieving said bar code information from said memory, for modifying image-forming device settings, and for assigning said image-forming device settings to a selected media tray.

20.     The device of claim 19, wherein said memory comprises random access memory (RAM), non-volatile RAM (NVRAM), or read only memory (ROM).